

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 8, 2013

Agenda Item: Fishing Regulation Changes for 2014

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Propose Regulations

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background

The F&W Commission has authority to make changes to FWP fishing regulations. The process for reviewing and amending fishing regulations is based on a four-year cycle. The first year of each cycle is dedicated to actively soliciting ideas for changes from the public. During the following three years of the cycle ("off-cycle" years), ideas are only solicited internally from FWP biologists, fish managers and enforcement personnel. Regulation changes are proposed to the Commission during off-cycle years only if they meet certain criteria: achieve enforcement needs, provide clarification, are important for species conservation, are removing regulations no longer relevant, or fulfill direction provided in management plans. 2014 is an off-cycle year; the next year with full public involvement will be 2016.

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP will post its recommendations for regulation changes on the FWP website prior to the August 8 Commission meeting. After the meeting, FWP will conduct a 30-day public comment period. Following public input, FWP will prepare recommendations for final regulation changes and present these to the Commission in October.

Alternatives and Analysis

The following is a brief summary of FWP's recommendations for 2014 fishing regulation changes:

Little Bitterroot Lake (west of Kalispell): remove the bag limit for bass.

North Fork Flathead River: provide for the harvest of hybrid rainbow/cutthroat trout.

Silver Lake, Storm Lake Creek, and Warm Springs Creek (all near Anaconda): establish closure areas to protect bull trout.

Big Spring Creek (near Lewistown): remove the catch-and-release regulation for trout.

Canyon Ferry, Hauser and Holter reservoirs: adjust bag limits for yellow perch and walleye.

Pelican Point Pond #1 (near Cascade): remove the bag limit for northern pike.

Alternatively, the Commission could propose different regulation changes or modify those recommended by FWP.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission propose the regulation changes as presented for public comment.

Proposed Motion

I move to propose the recommended changes to the 2014 fishing regulations and instruct FWP to solicit comments from the public.